

# The Hobo: Last of the

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to pick up a hitchhiker because he might be a crook who might rob you or steal your car or something. Now it's the other way around; a lot of people are picking up hitchhikers and dumping them in the ditch.

I recommend tramping, if you find that interesting. I think young people today have forgot how to walk. People years ago didn't think anything of walking from one town to another. The tramps used to have a beautiful time. There'd be lots of places where people would just wait until their old friend the tramp came around their way to sit and tell stories.

Stay off the main roads; it's no fun walking down a main highway with cars whizzing past you, blowing fumes. The thing to do is go off to some country road, some picturesque place in the mountains where the springs are running.

Still, the real hobo sticks to the railroad most often. There's something about it that captures a man's soul.

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tissues in the bindle, 'cause you're in a heck of a jam without 'em. Unless you want to go back to the old system of leaves.

A boxcar is a good place to sleep. Even if I'm not riding the rails, if the weather is bad I go to a junkyard and sleep in an old car. You can always get a junk car some place, and it's a very good place to sleep. Or, if it's real wintertime, all big commercial buildings have a heating plant with an operator 24 hours a day. I go down in the basement and find this man and ask him if I can sleep in there. It's always nice and warm.

You used to be able to sleep in pretty near any jail. But that's getting harder. Some places they've got to clear it with the chief or someone before they let you in for the night.

Then there are the institutions. The Salvation Army and the mission stations in the bigger cities will put people up. I've never done it, but a lot of hoboes hit the church bit, staying in one mission after another till they're kicked out. They call 'em mission stiffs. I don't go near the Red Cross — they're full of red tape.



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Still, the real hobo sticks to the railroad most often. There's something about it that captures a man's soul.

The old-time hoboes used to follow the weather. Like they'd follow the wheat harvest, starting down in Oklahoma and gradually working north till they reached clear into the Dakotas and Idaho. Just working enough to get by, to get 50 bucks in their pockets and move on. A lot will winter in Florida or around New Orleans.

The weather tells the hobo when and where to travel. If he's going to see the country, he wants to hit the beautiful parts. There's gotta be hills and mountains to make scenery; there's no beauty in flat ground. In the East I like all of Pennsylvania, most all of Maryland, most all of Virginia. Then I skip down into the Deep South, like Mississippi, which is a beautiful state and full of lakes, too. My favorite railroad lines are the Western Maryland and the Reading and parts of the Penn

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If the weather is right, the best of all is sleeping out under a tree. The Hotel Weeds they call it. Or the jungle. You can't sleep right flat on the ground, of course. You've gotta have some cardboard under you and some cardboard over you, even if you have a sleeping roll. You cover up with an old carton and it keeps the dampness and the dew off you. Sometimes the dew gets so heavy it's like it was rainin'.

A real hobo takes care of the jungle; he always leaves it cleaner than he found it.

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Then out West there's the Southern Pacific, the Santa Fe, and the Union Pacific up through Oregon and Washington. Washington is one of the most beautiful states to be a hobo in. It's full of orchards for eating, and then up north it's real beautiful mountains. Just to ride through there for a couple of days is a great adventure.

A hobo can carry a little bag, like I have, or a sleeping roll, which is the real old way of doing it. They call the sleeping roll a bindle. In the bindle you have a towel and a toothbrush and a razor and a change of clothes, and you can keep your leftover food in it. The bindle has a rope tied around it, and you can throw it over one shoulder. That way it leaves your hands free so you can catch hold

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It's very easy if you get broke and your conscience don't bother you to go to somebody's back door and ask 'em for something to eat. Not in Chicago or Toledo or New York, but in small towns I would say 75 per cent of the people will give you something. The younger housewives now are scared, as is natural; the times have changed so much.

But you always offer to work. I've done this even though I've had some money with me, because I wanted to meet the people. The women in their 50s and 60s all want to tell me about how they used to feed the hoboes. And they're proud of it, it's a blessing that's remained with 'em. They haven't seen a hobo in 20 years, probably, so we just sit and talk.

The hobo just goes up to the back door — never the front — and says: "Listen, I'm travelin' along out here, I've been ridin' this freight and I got off and I'm goin' on the road and I'm up-



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For washing, lots of buildings have spigots on 'em someplace. There's always water around a house, if it's not winter. I just go up there and wet a rag. I don't stay around washing but wet the rag and get on out of the yard. I can always go to a filling station and get water and use the toilet, too. But if you're ever out on the road where you can't get to one, it's best to carry a roll of

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The hobo just goes up to the back door — never the front — and says: "Listen, I'm travelin' along out here, I've been ridin' this freight and I got off and I'm goin' on down the road and I'm uptight for a little food. I'd be glad to cut your grass or do some chores if you'd fix me up a sack of sandwiches, and while you're fixin' I'll be glad to work." The grass always needs cuttin', or you can weed a flower bed. Any old-time hobo knows how to prepare a flower bed or work in a garden or prune a tree.

You have to look presentable. A person don't want a smelly, horrible-looking old type in the house and they will hesitate to let you in. But if you look too prosperous, on the other hand, they don't like you, either. It's better to have some rags on you. I have my old outfit, so people look at me and they say, "There's a hobo." I like to look like one.



# he Free Man

Of course, if you don't want to go door to door, if you've got some money you feel like parting with, you can buy a loaf o' bread and a ring o' red — which is a hunk of baloney — or a bag of beans or a box of rice. They're cheap and you can go a long way on them. It's less trouble to get a can of baked beans and warm 'em up, but if there's time it's cheaper to cook dry beans. You put 'em in a coffee can of some-thin' and cook 'em for a couple of hours. Why, you can eat real cheap that way. And if you got leftovers you can take 'em with you and eat 'em again.

A lot of times you can get spoiled fruit and vegetables free from a storekeeper and cut off the bad part and eat them. The man on the road should be able to go into a grocery or bakery and fast-talk someone out of some stuff. Of course, butcher stores are another thing. Some of the meat they try to pass off on you, when you think they're doin' you a favor, is all gray and spoiled. They don't give you any of them nice bright-red steaks.

I don't like to panhandle for money. A lot of hoboes sell needles or something you can carry around with you and peddle which is OK. But flat-out asking for money seems

you're trampin' and usin' up energy, you gotta eat more; if you're ridin' a boxcar you eat less. But wherever you are, you take what you can get.

A few old-timers in their 70s or 80s are still on the road at least part of the time. They're almost all found in California or the Southwest, where the weather is warm. Some go north along the coast to Washington, Idaho, and Montana in the summer. I believe I'm the only one of the old brotherhood who still rides the rails in the East. Once in a while, I'll see a hippie or bum or someone just going down to the next town, but that's it.

I've been back on the road in the East for four years now and I haven't seen one other real hobo. We're dying out.

It's sad. The hoboes are the last of the free men.

## Coal Facts

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I don't like to panhandle for money. A lot of hoboes sell needles or something you can carry around with you and peddle, which is OK. But flat-out asking for money seems to be different from going to the back door and asking to work for something to eat.

I once was trying to mooch some ground coffee and I went to about six houses and they said, "No, we don't have any to spare." So at the last one, the lady says no, and I says, "Do you have any in the coffee pot, second-hand grounds?" She's ashamed to say I couldn't have them even, so I asks her to wrap 'em in a piece of newspaper. I took 'em down to the jungle and got good coffee out of 'em. You boil it extra long in the pot, and it's still good, if a little on the weak side.

To me, making your own fire and cooking is the funnest thing there is. And bread and canned baked beans you

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of Mines has published IC 8597, "Active List of Permissible Explosives and Blasting Devices Approved Before December 31, 1972," which supersedes its earlier Circular 8493. The current list of permissible explosives includes 71 brands, of which 11 are gelatinous, 56 are the granular type and four are water-gel explosives, an entirely new type of ammonium nitrate-based explosive for use in coal mines. The list of permissible blasting devices comprises five Cardox models. The circular contains the names and locations of manufacturers, and the Bureau's general requirements for permissible explosives and blasting devices, in addition to details about each type listed. NCA will obtain copies on request, for members only.

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To me, making your own fire and cooking is the funnest thing there is. And bread and canned baked beans you can practically live on. Beans is one of the most concentrated protein foods there is. I never eat white bread. If you like it, all right, but I always get cracked wheat or a good grade of brown bread — it's better for you. In the old days, we used to get a good-sized loaf of bread for 7 cents — they didn't slice it — and a can of baked beans for 8 cents. You cut a slice off the end of the loaf and reach down the middle and pull the inside all out and save it in your bindle, and you open the can of beans and pour it in there and eat it like an ice cream cone. You couldn't eat that much — and for 15 cents!

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. . . . Pittston has leased big acreage in the Dry Fork section of McDowell . . . . The U of Ky.'s College of Engineering has scheduled for Sept. 24 a demonstration of a remotely-controlled mine vehicle that was developed under contract with the Bureau of Mines. The battery-powered vehicle has been tested in coal mines during the past two years.

The man who used to be State Tax Commissioner and who went on to be a Consol veep and then on to Conoco, Howard Hardesty, had some words recently to say about the energy shortage, saying that persons in responsible positions who say such shortages don't exist are doing a great "disservice to the Nation" and that "Such allegations are untrue. They mislead, confuse, and delay a public commitment to the positive programs essential to energy adequacy. There



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There's a book called "Stalking the Wild Asparagus," on how to live off the land, and it's by an old ex-hobo, Euell Gibbons. This fella was raised in a poor family and his mother taught him all the wild foods that are good to eat. I know quite a few of 'em and I'm trying to learn more. There are all kinds of greens. Dandelion greens are only good in the spring, but there are others that, if you find them in the shade, stay tender all summer. And there are certain kinds of roots and berries and nuts you can live on just fine.

I love mushrooms. Last fall I picked a whole frying pan of the most wonderful mushrooms in the country right off a lawn when it was raining. They was just poppin' up, and I took 'em and rinsed 'em off and fried 'em. If

The man who used to be State Tax Commissioner and who went on to be a Consol veep and then on to Conoco, Howard Hardesty, had some words recently to say about the energy shortage, saying that persons in responsible positions who say such shortages don't exist are doing a great "disservice to the Nation" and that "Such allegations are untrue. They mislead, confuse, and delay a public commitment to the positive programs so essential to energy adequacy. There is no conspiracy to eliminate competition to drive up prices and to weaken environmental regulations." . . . Arnold B. Meadows has joined Pocahontas Fuel as a section foreman at the Beech Fork Mine. Gerald Edward Ray has joined Bishop Coal Company as a section foreman . . . There have been promotions at Consolidation Coal's Ohio Valley Division in Moundsville. Richard O. Rouse, vice president and general manager of the division, reports that Jon E. Kelly has been upped from senior mining engineer to assistant to the general superintendent of the McElroy Mine. Phillip G. Reeves has been promoted from project engineer to assistant to the general superintendent of the Shoemaker Mine.























